bulk, swelled by photographs, letters, telegrams, dried flowers—the whole making tip a confusion in which every one but the owner would seek in vain to find some sense or meaning.

About six years ago I moved into a smaller house in London, and I burnt a great many of my earlier diaries as immovable rubbish. The few passages which I shall quote in this book from those which escaped destruction will prove that my bonfire meant no great loss!

Still, when it was suggested to me in the year of my stage jubilee that I ought to write down my recollections, I longed for those diaries ! I longed for anything which would remind me of the past and make it live again for me. I was frightened. Something would be expected of me, since I could not deny that I had had an eventful life, packed full of incident, and that by the road I had met many distinguished and interesting men and women. I could not deny that I had been fifty years on the stage, and that this meant enough material for fifty books, if only the details of every year could be faithfully told. But it is not given to all of us to see our lives in relief as we look back. Most of us, I think, see them in perspective, of which our birth is the vanishing point. Seeing, too, is only half the battle. How few people can describe what they see !

While I was thinking in this obstructive fashion and wishing that I could write about my childhood like Tolstoi, about my girlhood like Marie Bashkirtseff, and about the rest of my days and my work like many other artists of

the pen, who merely, by putting black upon white, have had the power to bring before their readers not merely themselves "as they lived/' but the most homely and intimate details of their lives, the friend who had first impressed on me that I ought not to leave my story untold any longer, said that the beginning was easy enough: